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# FREE THOUGHTS

Occasioned by the

Heads of Agreement, &c.

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# ADVERTISEMENT

TO THE

# R E A D E R.

**T**He Author of these following Sheets, through his extreme Modesty, cannot be prevailed upon, to let his Name be ascribed to them; but I do assure you, He is a Learned and a Pious Divine of the *Established Church of England*; One that hath been deeply sensible of, and affected with, the lamentable Breaches and Divisions in the Church of God, made and kept up by the designed Artifices of too many amongst us, who have been industriously labouring, for this last *Century*, to undermine and destroy her. He now heartily rejoices to see so happy an *Agreement* begun to be set on foot by any sort of Christians, in laying aside their particular and needless Disputes; and hopes, and daily prays, That we may (all of us) be persuaded, *in this our day, to mind the things that make for the Churches Peace*; considering, That *whosoever sincerely loves God, cannot but love his Brother also.*

# FREE THOUGHTS

Occasioned by the

## Heads of Agreement

Assented to by the

### UNITED MINISTERS

In and about L O N D O N ;

Formerly called

### Presbyterian and Congregational.

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*To Love is to believe, to hope, to know ;  
'Tis an Essay, a Taste of Heaven below :  
Could we forbear Dispute, and practice Love,  
We should agree as Angels do above.*

*Mr. Waller's 3d Cant. of Divine Love.*

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L I C E N S ' D, Sept. 1. 1691.

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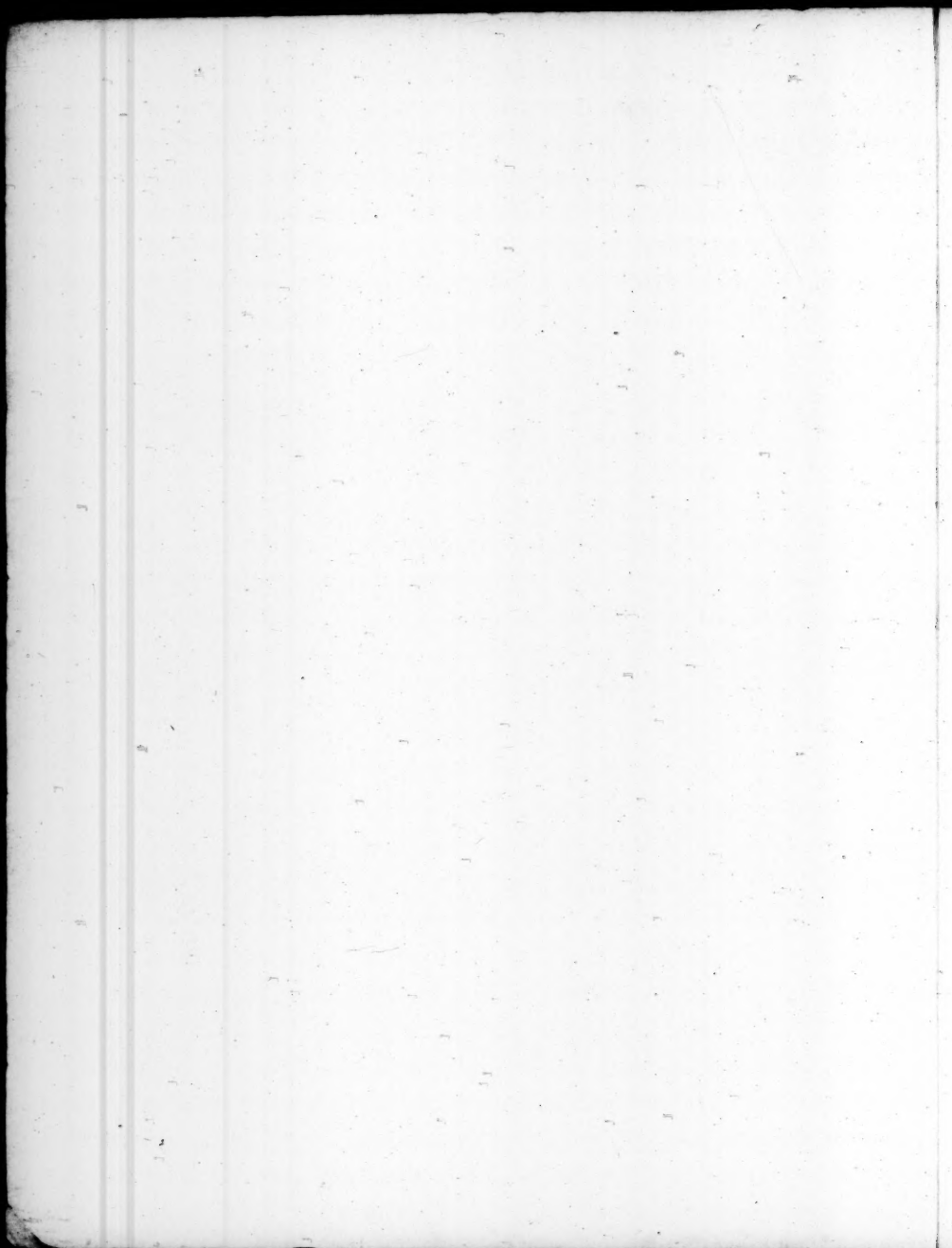
**The Second Edition Corrected and Amended.**

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L O N D O N :

Printed for *Tim. Goodwin*, at the *Maidenhead* over-  
against *St. Dunstan's Church* in *Fleetstreet*. 1691.

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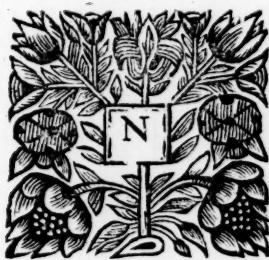




# FREE THOUGHTS

Occasioned by the

## Heads of Agreement, &c.



O sooner had I read the *Heads of Agreement, &c.* and *Preface* to them, but, to confess my Free Thoughts, I could not but rejoice in what I hoped proceeded from the good Spirit of God; *whose fruit is love and peace*, Gal. 5. 22. Nor can any one who calls himself a Christian, lightly esteem of that Character, where ever 'tis found, which our best Master hath left of his Disciples, that they *have love one for another*, Joh. 13. 35. And for my own part, I dare not but acknowledge it, where ever 'tis sincerely aimed at, as I hope it is, by those who have given themselves the Stile of **United Ministers**: 'Twill be a great Scandal, should they cover any other Design with this their so-

lemn Profession; and as great a Scandal in others, if they prove true to what they would have the world believe by this their Agreement, Not to receive what they herein profess, with the same Charity that led them to it.

For, not to enter into the several Heads there drawn up, or in the least concern ones self in the different points there spoken to, with the Doctrines or Opinions therein taught or insinuated; the great design of the Accommodation, the mutual bearing with, and forbearing one another, and the giving the right hand of Fellowship to each other, with the disclaiming the imposing those terms of Agreement on others, *Pref. p. 1.* is what neither as Men or Christians, we can gain-say. No; it too nearly imports us to consider, who 'tis that hath said, *Blessed are the peace-makers, Matth. 5. 9.* and with them to put in for the honourable stile, of being call'd the *Children of God.*

All that we have to wish for them and our selves, is, That in withstanding so good a work, where ever any thing offers fairly at it, none of us be found to fight against God: For as they have had the honour first to have effected what others have been so long designing and offering at, tho hitherto without the wish'd-for Success; so, I hope, it may be but the beginning or pledge

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(I would give it any name, whereby to provoke men to so laudable a Jealousie, *Rom. 11. 11.*) of that more general Union which ought to be among all Christians: 'Tis something to have shewed us, That an Union is possible among those who have been so long at so great a distance; and 'tis a good Omen at least, that *Manasseh* shall not always be against *Ephraim*, and *Ephraim* against *Manasseh*, and they, together, against *Judah*, *Isa. 9. 21.* No; 'tis very great pity, that any of those who ought all to be the Sons of Peace, should any longer envy or vex one another; 'tis prophesied they shall not do it, *Isa. 11. 13.* And the expectation of the world seems to be upon it: Never were men so full of Hopes as at present, that it cannot be long ere the Kingdom of our Lord shall be advanced in the world; and what is so proper a means to this, as the Love and Unity, without which it cannot flourish?

But to see now what it is may raise our hopes, as to the good Effects of this Agreement; what it is must convince us, That they who join in it, are sincere in this excellent work of Peace.

This will be judg'd chiefly by these two Things:

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1. The first is, Their living up among themselves, to what they so solemnly profess.
2. The second, Their taking no less care, that this their Agreement diffuse it self in a charitable and peaceable deportment towards others.

With respect to the first, they themselves have given us the Test of their Sincerity, *Pref. p. 3. viz.* To forbear Condemning and Disputing those different Sentiments and Practices they have expressly allowed for; To reduce all *distinguishing Names*, to that of **United Brethren**; To admit no uncharitable Jealousies, or censorious Speeches, much less any Debates whether Party seems most favoured by their present Agreement: And 'tis what very highly imports them to persevere in; God and their own Consciences will be the best Witnesses hereof, and the world will expect it from them.

And then with respect to the second, it will no less import them, to see that the Love and Charity they so much cry up among themselves, extend it self to all others; *but especially to them who are of the household of faith, Gal. 6. 10.*

For it is not enough for the obtaining that Peace and Concord which ought to be among Christians, for any Party or Parties to say, We  
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are agreed among our selves upon the common Principle of Forbearance, if at the same time the Division is kept up as to others; the same jealousies and censorious speeches, the same heats and animosities still continued towards those, who (to say no more) we cannot but own to be in the Profession of the same Reformed Faith with us: No; this will be at the best to be still as those of whom one said, *I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos,* 1 Cor. 3. 5. Of both whom the Apostle puts the Interrogation, therein including the more vehement Assertion, *are ye not carnal, and walk as men?* v. 3.

Here therefore will be the principal thing, How watchful these *United Brethren* shall for the future be, against every degree of Scandal in this matter; for if it be *the love of Christ* than *constrains them*, 2 Cor. 5. 14. 'twill not run out to those of this or the other Denomination only, but to all, whosoever they are, whom we can charitably believe to belong to Christ, and to be true Members of his Church; which therefore I cannot but recommend, as what ought to be compriz'd, if not in the express *Heads of Agreement*, yet at least in what must of necessity come in, as an after-proof of their being sincere therein, *i. e.* in that love of Peace, to which this ought to be subservient.

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And for my own part, I am willing thus to construe it, and should heartily rejoice to see this effect of it, that others would think of a like Agreement; I mean not, in piecing up for the strengthening a Party, ( if that should prove the Secret here, we could not say, *The blessing of the Lord be upon you; we bless you in the name of the Lord*, Psal. 129. 8.) but really Uniting in what may make for the Peace of all; I could wish bearing and forbearing, were the Establish'd Principle of every Persuasion or Communion, and as the Apostle speaks, *Heb. 10. 24. we had no other strife, but to provoke unto love and to good works.*

Nor do I therefore enter into the private Sentiments of these hitherto several Persuasions; I do it not with respect so much as to the *Heads of Agreement, assented to by the United Ministers*; nor do I think it necessary to the Agreement of or with any others, that all particularities should be too nicely scann'd: Men may be of different Opinions, or at least, differently express themselves, and yet all hold of the Foundation; the same sort of Food may find different Appetites, and as different Digestions, and yet may make wholesome Chyle, beget strength and growth in all that feed on it: And 'twould be hard, if because of these differences in mens Constitutions, the good Phyfician, who ought to have the same  
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tenderness for the health of all his Patients, should from such a diversity, peremptorily determine one to be in a perfect state of Health, another to labour of a Consumption, or Plague, and forbid the others to converse with them, for fear of the Infection; 'tis easie to make the Application; We are all, *as new born babes, to desire the sincere milk of the word, that we may grow thereby,* 1 Pet. 2. 3. that's the common Nourishment for every Temper; but must we therefore (to follow the Allusion) not eat together, because we have not just the same Taste and Relish of what is set before us.

This therefore is not what is so scrupulously to be attended in such an Agreement, that men must just Jump in every Punctilio, which however in it self of less moment, yet may have been hitherto prest to an extremity; and were I worthy to offer the Measures of a True, Christian accomodation to any, it should not be so much by endeavouring how to reconcile their different Sentiments, by taking them up Point by Point, and shewing which ought to be accepted, or retain'd; which to be condemn'd or rejected; as by pressing an Accord in that which ought to be the Rule to them all; as knowing what is advised by the Apostle, *Phil. 3. 15. Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded; and if in*



any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you.

Now what is it must be our Rule? Have we it not in our hands? Is it not the Gospel to be received in the Simplicity thereof? And if so, Why do we differ in those things which we have no Commission from thence to divide about? saith the Apostle, *1 Cor. 11. 16. But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God.* And so the Assembly in their Annotations on that place; We have no such Custom, for the Church of God to contend about matters of this nature: 'Twas of their men praying with their heads covered, and the women with their heads uncovered, he had been speaking; but from thence proceeds to lay down this as a Rule in all matters of difference; and so it stands there applicable to what follows, as well as what precedes: And I persuade my self, I dare so far to Prophecie, That where ever men shall come to the right understanding of this (as the same Apostle speaks, *1 Cor. 12. 31.*) more excellent way of Charity; more Excellent (for that's the Logick of that place, as may be seen by looking into the Context); than the best Gifts, the highest Attainments, whether in Tongues, or Prophecie, in understanding all Mysteries and Knowledge, and a Faith that can remove Mountains, Chap. 13. 1, 2.  
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( And one would think these were sufficient proofs of a true Church, wherever they should be found; but it seems, much below that of Charity ); Whenever men shall come to this Advance in their Religion, Peace and Union would soon follow, and the Blessings of both be the certain effect of that Agreement. Nor would there need any drawing up a scheme, or model of that in the several Heads to be accorded, where there should in every man's breast be that *Urim* and *Thummim*, ( Charity is both ) which could not deceive him.

For suppose a man to be a Christian, grounded in the first and general Principles of his great and good Master's Doctrine; suppose him acquainted with the true sense of the Baptismal form, and the explication of that as far as 'tis clearly given in the Creed; ( for I think nothing so prejudicial to the sincerity of Truth, as the insinuating matters Disputable, into those forms which are to consist only of Fundamentals; ) suppose him, if not able to explain himself, ( for 'tis not necessary for every Christian to be a Doctor of the Chair, a profound and subtile Philosopher, and able to wade through all the Intricacies that men of design may have perplexed truth with ) in all the nicities of the Schools; yet at least with *Mary* and *Martha*,  
*Mary*

*Mary Magdalen*, and the other Women that followed Christ, with the plain and untaught Disciples; (for we find none of them all bred at *Gamaliel's* feet, but only *St. Paul*, who was to have to do with men of Learning; the *Stoicks* and *Epicureans*, the Polite *Corinthians* and Quaint *Athenians*, and at their own Weapon to beat them out of all their Schisms and Sects) to receive the truth in the love of it, and to let that love, (as to their Lord, so to his Disciples too) be the comment on it; supposing, I say, but this, and what face can there be of dividing upon the Truth? What danger of making shipwrack of that Faith, where there shall be no Storms nor Tempests, to which mens boisterous passions and turbulent disputatious humour shall expose them? To speak closer yet; What occasion of dividing in Communion? I speak not of what they shall herein do by choice; but where (as the phrase hath obtained), they may be call'd to occasional Communion, if they are convinced that the true Worship of God be kept in their respective Assemblies; the true Worship of God, I say, which is not tied to this or the other place, or way, but to the Spiritual sincerity of those, who with an honest and pure mind, what ever the manner of it be, adore God.

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I must confess, setting up Altar against Altar, must needs be highly provoking in the Eyes of God, because 'tis love and concord that must Sanctify every Communion. Nor is that my meaning, as if where this were done, the Members of one way of Communion, were to shew their Charity by running in to those of another; no, that might be to strengthen the Schism and widen the breach: But what I hereby plead for, is, That what Communion soever, or Persuasion, men shall chuse to be of, they would not do it in opposition, and out of a spirit of division, but so as to be willing still to own themselves the Members of the Universal Church, whatever be the particular Church they shall joyn with: And were that the measure of mens actings, they might preserve one, without condemning another; they might approve all that is good in any, though they cleave to that in which they think most good things (and what is more for their Edification) are to be found. And I am apt to think this was what the Apostle aims at in the first Epistle to the *Corinthians*, That however they might for some particular reason, one prefer *Paul*, another *Cephas*, another *Apollos*, yet that this ought not to be to the disparaging of any of them, as if the Ministry of them all were not what they might have joyn'd with them in:

No

No question they might be very good Christians, who joyn'd either with Paul, with Cephas, or Apollos; but if done to the prejudice of the Communion, kept up under either of the other, 'tis that which speaks them to be carnal, and to walk as men, 1 Cor. 3. 3. Nay he goes farther; If Christ himself be pretended to be immediately depended upon, to the evacuating the use of the Ministry (for that seems to be understood by their being of Christ) 'twill be a Schism, and Division, scarce compatible with being Christians.

This therefore is what I would caution against, That in order to mens joining with one another, every persuasion would take care, that they set not up themselves in opposition to one another; for if that be done, there can be no Communion, no occasional Communion, in which the Members of any other persuasion can partake with them. And this I take to be the design of what is delivered by the *United Ministers* in the 4th Head of their Agreement; wherein they declare, *That known Members of particular Churches, may have occasional Communion with one another, in the Ordinances of the Gospel, viz. the Word, Prayer, Sacraments, Singing of Psalms, dispensed according to the mind of Christ.* Nor would I ask any greater condescension in this matter, than that Christians would thus

thus candidly bear it towards one another: For then I am sure the difference would not be so great; but that however differing in Apprehensions and Practices in some lesser things, they must, even many of those who have hitherto withdrawn from Communion with one another, own one another to be true Churches, (*Heads of Agreement, 1. par. 2.*) And the consequence of that would be, to be so far from Censuring their Assemblies, as to comply and join with them, when thus call'd to it: And our Lord's Rule to the Woman of *Samaria*, would justify the practice; who speaking of the Times of the Gospel, thus hath stated it, *Joh. 4. 20, 21, 22, 23, 24.* Our fathers, said the Woman, *worshipp'd in this mountain, and ye say, That in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.* There was the Controversie, Where true Communion was to be had? and *Jerusalem*, in the time of the Law, had the preference; for 'twas there God had put his Name, as may be seen, *1 Kings 9. 3.* But Jesus said unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at *Jerusalem*, worship the Father; ye worship ye know not what; there 'tis given against the Samaritans; We know what we worship; for salvation is of the Jews: But Salvation being of them, shall not now tye the Worship any more to *Jerusalem*, than to any other place: But the hour cometh,

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eth, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship him: God is a spirit, and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth. Be the Worship in Spirit and Truth, if we own one another to be true Churches, we must grant it is, and we cannot (where Providence leads to it), refuse the Communion with such a Church.

This I say still under that guard, That it must be where the Breach is not industriously kept up; where all Heats and Animosities are drawing to an end; where there is no profess'd Separation, no design for Schism and Division; as I would believe this *Agreement of the United Ministers* to be. And methinks there should be nothing strange or new in this to him, who considers that 'tis but agreeable to what hath been the constant practice ever since the Reformation, among most of the Reformed, tho of different Denominations: Thus the Protestants of *France* with the Protestants of *England*; and the Protestants of *England* with those of *France*, (I put the Instance there, because that comes up to the particulars I have been insisting on) have frequently communicated without any the least Scruple or Exception to their several Forms of Worship.

And I the more press this Instance, because if  
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it be allow'd, that on both sides they have done well herein, 'twill remove that great *Mormo* as to the matter of the Ministry, and their Lawful Authority to preach and administer the Sacraments; which has been the occasion of so many fierce Disputes, and yet lies as the great obstacle in the way of such a mutual Communion.

But (methinks) if a Condescension herein will open a door to that Charity we are pleading for, we should not be so stiff in it, as thereby to overthrow all the possibility of Agreement; I am sure, if we may make the practice of the Apostle our Example, (let me say, of our Apostle St. Paul, the Apostle of the *Gentiles*) we shall no longer do it: Now saith St. Paul, *Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife, and some also of good will. The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds: But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the Gospel. What then? notwithstanding every way, whether in pretence or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice, Phil. 1. 15, 16, 17, 18.* What? Rejoices the Apostle, that men preached Christ, tho' of Envy and Strife, of Contention, and not sincerely? And shall we put a stop to that Preaching, which pretends only to beat down Strife, Envy, Contention, and sets up for the Sincerity and Simplicity of the Gospel?



But what then? Shall all be licensed? Shall they that run before they are sent, be presently run after, and without distinction attended to? I do not say it; but however, I would not be of those that judge more uncharitably of any, than the Gospel warrants: Let them stand and fall all of them to their own Master: We know our Lord's determination in the case, *Mark 9. 38, 39, 40. And John answered him, saying, Master, we saw one casting out Devils in thy name, and he followeth not us, and we forbid him, because he followeth not us. But Jesus said, Forbid him not; for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me; for he that is not against us, is on our part.* 'Tis our common employment to beat down the Power of the Devil, and cast him out of Sinners; let us not envy one another the Success of such Undertakings: If Christ be preached, if the Devil be cast out, it becomes us at least to say in our Lord's words, *He that is not against us, is on our part.*

I do think the Function of the Ministry to be a distinct and sacred Function; but I think the Gospel, by which men are commission'd to it, to be more Sacred; and wherever, in whatever mouth, under whatever difference of Administration, *1 Cor. 12. 5.* I find that, I dare not but give it the Reverence that is due to the Doctrine  
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of my good Master: *Be it of envy, be it of strife, be it of contention, be it in pretence, or in truth, yet if Christ is preached, therein I do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.*

I should have greater Joy, and so ought every good Christian to have, if there were no division: and that which makes me thus willing to condescend, is, because I hope 'tis the way that there may be none. For did those who have hitherto been known under the name of *Dissenters*, believe this were our Temper, this the Charity of the Church of *England*, I am sure they would have one reason more, and that of the weightiest import, not to differ from us.

Charity! Charity! Divine Charity! What would it not do, were it thoroughly embraced! As the Apostle says, 1 Cor. 13. 4, 5, 6, 7, 8. *Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not, charity vaunteth not it self, is not puffed up, doth not behave it self unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinkeeth no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth: Beareth all things, believeth all things; hopeth all things, endureth all things: Charity never faileth.*

And what excuse can we have, if we let it not thus operate with us? For as the good St. Paul there goes on; St. Paul, than whom none was more inflam'd with this Divine Fire! *We know in part, we prophesie in part; 'tis imperfect, the best*  
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of all our knowledge, and therefore what ought to make us ready to bear with the Imperfections of one another ; *We are all*, (St. Paul speaks it in his own person, and I believe none of us will pretend to exceed him) whatever the Tongue we speak with be, be it that of *men and angels* , *but as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal*, v. 1. if Charity give not the more articulate and intelligible sense to what we speak.

'Tis true, in the Preface to the Heads of Agreement, p. 1. 'tis declared, *against intermeddling with the National Church-Form*: But I would take it to be done with that Candor and Sincerity, as not to suppose the *Uniting Brethren* thereby to insinuate any Uncharitableness towards those of that Form ; and only, as a matter beyond their Sphere, to leave them in the quiet Possession of what the Establish'd Law gives them: And as they *disclaim the imposing their Terms of Agreement on others*, *all Coercive Power being* ( as they add ) *as unsuitable to their Principles, as to their Circumstances* ; so neither ( whatever the Authority be, which the National Church-Form is supported with ) will those of it, I hope, be so rigid Imposers, ( for 'tis contrary to their Principles ) as to offer any other Terms, than what the *United Ministers* may easily accept of: The Terms of what is Doctrinal, they may ; for themselves, in the 8th Head of  
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*Agreement*, have allowed it to be agreeable to the Scriptures or Word of God, the perfect and only Rule of Faith and Practice : And as for what relates to *Discipline*, we know no Rule, but that it be for Decency, Order, and Edification ; and if we do or would explain this no otherwise than is agreeable to the same Scriptures, I cannot tell why we should not be heard.

But whether they can come up to us in this, or no, it ought not by their own Rule, to hinder the just exercise of their Charity towards us : For so they speak ( *Heads of Agreement* 1. par. 2. ) *We agree, That Particular Societies of Visible Saints, who under Christ their Head, are statedly joined together for ordinary Communion with one another in all the Ordinances of Christ, are Particular Churches, and are to owned by each other, as Instituted Churches of Christ, tho differing in Apprehensions and Practices in some lesser things : They are but lesser things, we pretend them to be no other; the things on which we differ, are not of the Foundation ; let not the Superstructure make us forget who 'tis is the Corner Stone, and what he has laid down as the Strength and Ornament of his Building, the very Character by which to distinguish those who belong to it ; By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, ('tis a Character equally required in all ) if ye have love one for another, John 13. 35.*

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Methinks, I would hope, I might promise this for those of the National Church-Form, there have been so many Overtures towards it. I am sure 'tis our best Interest, as well as Duty, it should be so; and if still there be any among us, who are otherwise-minded, and have other Notions of the Constitution they are of, than what exactly suit with this, it will import them in this *Day of Peace*, (I would hope I might speak in that stile) to consider, Whether it be not the greatest Wrong they can do to their Constitution, to expose it to the Construction which such a stiffness might raise in the minds of others.

For besides, that the Wisdom that is not Peaceable, peaceable in all the degrees and extent of the Word, is not from above, *James 3. 17.* So neither can it be expected it should succeed below, I mean among those, who after the sad experience of what our Divisions have led us to, are willing at length to follow the things that make for Peace; nor can I see any possibility of Establishing the Constitution on any other Foundation: Upon which account I cannot but bespeak it of those above all men, who have hitherto been look'd upon as such, who in the Psalmist's Phrase, *spoke for Peace*, *Psal. 120. 7.* That they would not be now for War; let not them above all men, cry up any thing in the defence

defence of what is Temporal in the Church, to the prejudice of what is Spiritual: I think 'tis not difficult to unriddle my meaning herein; but lest it should be obscure, it will become those at the Helm to explain it; God and men, and their own Consciences, must all rise up in Judgment against them, if they be now slack in promoting what before they could only humbly offer at, but may now with Authority advance; which I hope all good men will; and that to such a degree, as to remember, That if Self-denial be the Duty of every Christian, 'tis theirs who have most to deny themselves in: God, I hope, will give them Understanding in all things; if not, I doubt 'tis because the Season of such a Blessing, is not yet come; because We are not prepared to receive, nor They to convey it to us: And if that should prove the case, what can be expected, but that farther and greater Divisions should still happen in the Church? And that ( I wish we find it not true when 'tis too late ) to the utter Ruin of the Constitution. I think Divisions now naturally look towards it, and must inevitably so do, if we give our good God the Provocation to bring it on judicially.

If it be our fate, that there must still be Heresies among us, the Apostle hath told us the reason, 1 Cor. 11. 19. *'Tis that they which are appro-*

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*ved,*

ved, may be made manifest among us. Things are upon the *Crisis*, and God seems to be trying whether we will take out the lesson to which his Providence leads; and I think it imports us to do it, whoever be the present Monitor to bring us to it. I would not say, *Fas est & ab hoste doceri*; I would hope the being Enemies among Christians, should be at an end: And whereas the *United Ministers* declare against intermeddling with the National Church-Form, I could wish those of that Form, would be content themselves so far to intermeddle in this matter, as to follow the Pattern they have so happily set them, not only in superceding all differences among themselves, but whatever too have been between them, and those who have too long gone under the name of *Dissenters*; I mean not by being inclin'd so much to go over into the *Persuasions* and *divided Interests* of one another, as by making the *Interest* of all to be but one: Love would do it, were this as much in our Hearts, as 'tis upon some of our Tongues; did we without dissimulation follow after the things that make for Peace, and things where-with we may edifie one another, Rom. 14. 19. Peace is not so perverse a thing, that it would not follow us.

But that's the unhappiness, that what ever men talk of Union, yet for the most part nothing will



will serve them but to divide in the very prosecution of it ; For what is it, in all such projects that is by most generally aimed at, but the bringing others to their Party ? *i. e.* They are well enough contented to be reconciled, if they may be humoured in what is the very ground of all differences, and others will but be so peaceable, as to come to their beck : But if any thing of which they are fond, is toucht on in the accommodation, then presently there is no hopes of doing any good in the intended Condescension : No ; the point is, What Party shall have the honour of bringing over the other to it, not who shall most unfeignedly yield up themselves to the guidance of Truth, be it with this or the other, or with neither Party : For 'tis possible all may be in the wrong ; they are so, whilst Strife and Division (upon what account soever) is kept up among them, saith our Lord, *John 5. 44. How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour which cometh from God only ?* If there be any by-end or carnal respect that influences men, any having our own, or other mens persons in admiration, because of advantage, *Jude 17.* There is little hopes such should submit to Truth.

This therefore should be the first *Proemial* in all meetings for Peace, That men come thither

with the most firm resolution to yield up themselves to the standing Rule, by which all ought to walk ; that whatever other interest or worldly design may have hitherto stood in the way, they will sacrifice it to that Union, they pretend to advance ; that they will no more think that any worldly greatness or profit ought to stand in the way now, than they did before themselves were vested in it ; in a word, that they will meet as those, who are resolved to *hear what God the Lord will speak*, as 'tis *Psalms 85. 8.* For as it there follows, *he will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints, i. e. to those who are his in all they do ;* and as his, have no ear open to any thing, but what is agreeable to the will of their Lord ; who are his Saints, consecrated and devoted to Holiness ; a word which signifies men taken off from all worldly and carnal aims, and from none so much, as what breaks that band and tye ( 'tis love is that band ) by which they are his people. For is it not for the Communion of Saints, that we are called out of the World into the Church, in order to our Union, as with Christ our Head, so with one another, that we are made Christians? And shall Christians entertain those differences among them, which are still unchurching them? For 'tis not the being of this or the other particular or National Church, that will secure

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us in this prerogative of Saints, and the enjoyment of their Communion; unless, according to his direction, who is the Founder and Lord of the Church, we are one (so he prayed, and so he intended his Disciples should be, *John 17: 21, 22.*) as his Father is in him, and he in his Father. And I am sure that is an *Oneness* that will admit of no Division; if God and Christ cannot be Divided, neither can they who are to be one as they are one. *Ibid. v. 23.*

Nor can I therefore enough admire, what Notion of the Religion of our Lord they have, who can suffer themselves to be so imposed upon, as to think they ought to cry up any Constitution, (I speak of what is humane, what is not Divine in it) to that height, as thereby to stop the composure, were even that in danger, where 'tis fairly call'd for: For as *Gamaliel* rightly argued, *Acts 5. 38, 39.* *If this counsel, or this work be of men, it will come to nought: but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it.*

For my own part, I would be as zealous for the Constitution of which I am, as any other the most dutiful Son of the Church: But I think zeal and knowledge ought to go together. *Rom. 10. 2.* And that will tell me, it can be no diminution to a good cause to trust it self to a tryal by the word of Truth; no lessening them  
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that have it, to sacrifice even what may otherwise be lawful, to peace: I am sure so the Apostle determines, *1 Cor. 6. 12. All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient; all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.* And let us talk what we will of any thing else, till men come to that Temperament, as to let such a Christian Charity govern them in all things, *i. e.* thus to submit the decision of all Controversies, to what ought to have the only indisputed deference, the simplicity of the Gospel, and that Charity that ought every where to write the comment of it, we must not expect, *That the wolf should dwell with the lamb, and the leopard lie down with the kid. And the calf, and the young lion, and the fatling together, and a little child lead them. And the cow and the bear to feed, and their young ones to lie down together. And the lion to eat straw like the ox, and the sucking child to play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child put his hand on the cockatrice den. Or that they should not hurt nor destroy in all God's holy mountain. Isa. 11. 6, 7, 8, 9.*

And yet certainly this is a state we are to look for; there is no doubt but there will be a time, when the Prophecy shall take place; I trust it is at the door, and I am apt to believe, such is the Prospect I have of that Glorious Day when this shall be: He who waits to be gracious, *Isa.*

30. 18. only stays for such a Temper from us: *The glory of the Lord seems to be at the gate of the house, Ezek. 43. 4.* Let us no longer hinder its Entrance: What was it made this Glory to remove from the Church of the *Jews*? If we may judge of it by what must prepare their return, 'twas their Envy and Hatred of one another; for 'tis then, that the Envy of *Ephraim* shall cease; *Ephraim shall not envy Judah, nor Judah vex Ephraim, Isa. 11. 13.*

I could enlarge on this Topick, and shew how 'twas Envy had so great an Ingrediency in the heaviest Judgment that ever befel that People; I mean the utter Ruin of their City, Temple, and Countrey; and to profess my own fears, there's nothing seems to me so dreadful a Prognostick of what may befall this poor Church and Nation, as the Envy and Divisions that are, and have been among us: For if God speaks by the Prophet ( 'tis a place is fit should always sound in the ears of those who pretend to be the Sons of Peace ) whatever the *Heads of Agreement* be on the one hand, whatever the Temperament men promise to come to on the other, *They shall heal the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, Peace, where there is no peace, Jer. 6. 14.* And none there can be, where men go not heartily, sincerely, and with the Spirit of the Gospel

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to the work ; what can be expected, but as it there follows, *v. 15.* *Therefore they shall fall among them that fall ; at the time that I visit them, they shall be cast down, saith the Lord ?* And visit them certainly God will ; nothing but Judgment and Desolation can be look'd for, if this be their Temper ; if, as before *v. 13.* *From the least of them even to the greatest of them every one is given to covetousness ; and from the prophet even unto the priest, every one dealeth falsely.*

Not that I in the least question, but whatever of this may be our present lot, yet, as 'tis *Hos. 6. 1, 2, 3.* if we shall but say, *Come, and let us return unto the Lord, for he hath torn, and he will heal us, he hath smitten, and he will bind us up ; after two days will he revive us, in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight ; then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord.* 'Tis not our offering at a composure, 'tis not our beginning the good work, unless we are resolv'd to follow it to its perfection ; for then shall we know ; as is promised *Isa. 11. 9.* *For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.* 'Tis this Charity we are pleading for, and that is described in the foregoing verses, that will enlighten us for such a Knowledge.

I could wish there were no want of any further instruction to help us to take out the Lesson ;  
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but if we will not be otherwise taught it; why should we hope our wise Father should not reconcile us with his Rod: *Let us not deceive ourselves, God is not mocked*; nor will it be sufficient to have said, *a confederacy to all them who shall say, a confederacy*, Isa. 8. 12. No; as it there follows, v. 13. *if we sanctifie not the Lord of hosts himself, and let him be our fear and our dread*, we can look for nothing, but *to be broken*, v. 15.

God only knows what is the Scene his Providence hath reserved for us; let us be sure we follow on to know him, if we hope to have that Scene open upon us, that may make us happy: The eyes of the World, as well as of him who is our Omniscient Judge, are upon us; and if we altogether (*for to heal the hurt of the daughter of his people slightly, is no other*) hold our Peace at this time, then shall there Enlargement and Deliverance arise to his Church from another place; but we and our Father's house, our Relations and Adherents, shall be destroyed; and who knoweth whether 'tis not for such a time as this, that men from whom this will be so much expected, (let me so express it) are come to the Kingdom, intrusted with Power, and have liberty to act freely for the Truth.

I would not detract from the Reputation of any, let men take care they do it not them-

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selves; For let them be assured, who have on both hands given us the hopes of great things; let them be assured, I say, if there be now any drawing back, any temporising for what end soever, 'tis not the highest and most sanctified pretence that will lessen the beam in their Eye; no, every mote in such a ones Eye will be a beam; and if once they give men leave to think that 'twas any thing but God's Glory they aim'd at, any thing but Truth they had in chase, any thing but the Law and the Testimony, by which they will hereafter speak, *Isa. 8. 20.* any thing but the simplicity of the Gospel they shall maintain; if the World be thus deceiv'd by them, their Eyes will be open to see the cheat, and as in the case of *Laodicea, Rev. 3. 16.* because they are thus lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, God and the world will spue them out of their mouth.

But we are persuaded better things of those, whose business it is to promote peace, and things that accompany Salvation, *Heb. 6. 9.* though we thus speak. The season of it should bespeak it from them; the many changes and revolutions that have been on all hands, should seem to tell us, it looks like the last opportunity we are to expect wherein to do it. I have only to conclude in those compassionate words in which our best Lord, and Charitable Master, wept over *Jerusalem*, saying,

*Heads of Agreement, &c.* 35

saying, *If thou hadst known, even thou at least, in this thy day ('tis but a day, and if not redeem'd, 'twill over) the things which belong unto thy peace; I would not pronounce what follows in his peremptory Stile, but now they are hid; but rather turn it into a Prayer; May they never be hid from our eyes; And let every good Christian say, Amen.*

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F I N I S.



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